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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE IVOIRIAN NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION

REF: 08 ABIDJAN 638

1. (U) On January 22, Poloff met with President Victorine Wodie and Executive Secretary Dr. Gervais Boga of the National Human Rights Commission (CNDHCI) to discuss the commission's activities since it officially began work in July 2008. Wodie explained that the real work of the commission will begin in 2009, because the commission was busy in 2008 setting up its offices, drafting regulations governing the organization, and securing salaries for both the executive committee and commissioners. That said, CNDHCI did manage to accomplish several key steps in 2008.

2. (U) First, CNDHCI's initial draft of its 2007-2008 report has been reviewed and is expected to be ready for publication in February. Second, the commission has created subcommissions to deal with specific human rights issues, including prison conditions, teacher strikes, toxic waste victims, and community conflicts, to name a few. Regional commission members have also been assigned to each of the country's 19 regions. On the budget front, Wodie has more or less resolved the salary issue, and the five Executive Committee members are now receiving salaries. The remainder of the commissioners are also now beginning to see their allowances go into effect.

3. (U) The commission's hotline and executive office telephone numbers, which were widely publicized in newspapers, have kept phones ringing off the hook as Ivoirians have called in to report human rights abuses. To date, the commission has recorded 252 reported cases of human rights violations. Wodie attributes the number of phone calls to the high expectations the Ivoirian public has regarding the commission. She attributes this in part to the commission's success in resolving some cases simply by making phone calls and/or getting directly involved in cases.

4. (U) Wodie reiterated that many of her commissioners, who are not human rights experts, still require training. She said she would try to pursue greater collaboration and cooperation with the UN Human Rights Division on this front. (Note: Embassy Abidjan arranged with the VOLVIS program in Washington for two CNDHCI members to meet with human rights organizations in the U.S. in November 2008).

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